

## **TENTATIVE AGENDA**

### **NOST PLANNING SESSION FOLLOW-UP**

**Austin, Texas  
May 12, 2003**

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1 p.m.    | Convene<br>Recap of February Planning Session |
| 1:30 p.m. | Internal Board Functioning Discussion         |
| 3:00 p.m. | Resource Development Discussion               |
| 4:30 p.m. | NOP/NOSB Collaboration Discussion             |

### **Excerpts from February Notes**

***Priority: Internal Board Functioning  
Immediate Follow Up—By the Next Full Board Meeting***

1. Establish a task force to:

- Develop a strategy to get to develop a strategic plan, for example, convene on the Monday before the May meeting.

- Prioritize

- Develop specific, streamlined workplans

- Assign, delegate work and hold committees accountable

- Record, communicate and document progress

- Propose a committee structure.

- Recommend communication mechanisms.

- Suggest how to ensure ownership and follow up after full board meetings.

2. Circulate committee minutes, starting right away.

3. Acknowledge the uniqueness of the materials responsibility—it should not really be a committee.

***Priority: Resources***  
***Immediate Follow-up–by Next Board Meeting***

Establish a task force to:

1. Identify friends inside and outside of USDA, including in other Federal agencies, who are capable of lobbying or advocating on our behalf to help us obtain:

- A staff director.
- TAP funding.
- Peer review panel.
- Certification compliance assistance.

BECKY, DAVE

2. Identify board members to recruit an intern. OWUSU, MIKE, NANCY

3. Facilitate identification of research priorities linked to compliance with the Act, for example, in land grant schools. OWUSU, MIKE, NANCY

***Priority—a System for NOSB Recommendations***  
***Immediate Follow Up–By the Next Full Board Meeting***

1. Inventory existing NOSB recommendations. Jointly establish a timeline and plan for NOP response.

2. Establish mechanism for ongoing follow through on NOSB recommendations:

- a. Collaborate with NOP in drafting a process
- b. Follow standard procedures during public input (recommendations template, posting procedures, timelines, votes).
- c. Follow standard procedures for NOP response to NOSB final recommendations.

KIM, JIM, AND ANDREA

# **National Organics Standards Board Retreat**

Retreat held February 25-26, 2003  
Transcriptions prepared March 24, 2003

## **Retreat Objectives**

Strengthen the Board as an expert resource:

- Strategic planning
- Board structures

Improve communication with NOP staff:

- Feedback on workplan
- Brief staff on NOSB plan
- Mechanism(s) for ongoing communication

## **Agenda Overview**

NOP update *Barbara Robinson*

NOSB self-assessment--(Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)

Role of NOSB--Board vision, mission

NOSB priorities

Strategies to address priorities

Board structure

Follow-up planning

Prepare for and participate in sessions with NOP staff

Wrap up/next steps

## **Groundrules**

Talk

Listen

Focus on results

Decide by consensus

Be brief

Commit to follow up

## **NOP Update**

Farm bill optimism--The report being developed

Role of the NOP

- Unique accountability/traceability

- Marketing

NOP budget

- Under \$1 M--2/3 goes to salaries and benefits of staff, and the remainder covers:

  - Departmental overhead

  - Staff travel

  - Board travel

  - Equipment

  - TAP reviews (\$4,000 each)

The 2004 budget submitted (no increases)

The budget process:

- AMS administrator makes requests based on needs.

- Goes to deputy secretary who reviews it against USDA priorities and may make adjustments.

- Goes to Office of Management and the Budget (OMB) which reviews it against presidential priorities and may make adjustments.

Goes to Congress which is actually responsible for the budget; Congress holds hearings at which executive branch representatives testify, and Congress makes decisions. This is where the 2004 budget is now; there is no more input possible at the USDA level.

The materials list goes to the *Federal Register* next week. Fixes can be done later during the technical corrections phase.

## **Feedback on Pre-Retreat Interviews**

### ***Working Well***

Board members' communication with each other

We are not polarized.

We are respectful of one another.

We can disagree without it affecting the next issue; don't hold grudges.

There is more transparency in our procedures than before: The manual has helped a lot; the minutes of meetings are now written up and distributed.

We are diverse by design and it's a good combination.

Collectively, we have an incredible knowledge base.

Our members have a lot of experience in leadership roles.

Our public meeting structure is improved--The flow is better; we give forthright information; we get good input.

Dave has been great! He brought in parliamentary procedures and the leadership we needed.

We are able to respond rapidly to immediate issues, needs--though we would like to have to do less of that.

Individuals on our Board can think for themselves as well as representing the interests of their constituencies.

### ***Needs Work***

Our relationship with the NOP staff.

The TAP contractors.

Misunderstanding of staff/Board roles.

Staff rejecting our input after great effort.

Board communication (better, but still needs work).

Staff projects presented to Board only at end, after fully developed.

Transition to new responsibility--from organizing board to operating board.

Our understanding of how USDA operates.

Management of our workload--a few people on the board do most of the work.

Clarification of committee roles.

### ***Want to Get from Retreat***

Better working relationships between the Board and staff.

A collaborative process--recognizing Board/staff differences.

A vision and mission for the Board.

An action plan.

Revised committee structure.

Better understanding of NOP staff challenges.

Commitment to Board's work on the part of all members.

Procedures/steps for Board recommendations.

Fostering relationship with the bigger community.

Mechanics for communicating/collaborating with NOP.

Board website authority.

## **Board Self-Assessment**

### ***Strengths***

Individuals who think for themselves as well as representing interests.

Diversity.

Focus on the big picture.

Expertise.

Respectful communication.

Procedures.

Community involvement/support.

Ability to juggle agenda with new information.

Endurance!

Like to laugh!

Passion.

Engaged between meetings.

### ***Weaknesses***

Resource limitations.

Lack of info at times.

Limited time for responding.

Lack of vision-mission statement.

Climate--frustration levels high--can lose motivation.

Inequitable workload.

No structure for constant Board communication.

Recognition of NOP in bureaucracy.

Lack of political savvy--allies.

Term dates--we all come off the Board at the same time.

### ***Opportunities***

Constituencies--We need to explore ways to connect, for example, consumers, retailers.

This is a huge, growing area.

Coordination on future efforts similar to the effort on original proposed rule.

Marrying all our groups together for common alliances around issues.

Credibility of current regulations--that opens doors, for example, state-level partnerships, research.

Immediate opportunity to send message on integrity of organics.

We're at the forefront of addressing consumer concerns, for example, traceability. We could build on this as a model beyond organics.

Right now, develop better relationship with NOP.

Work smarter, on projects that won't get thrown away.

Intern (as Board support staff).

### ***Threats***

Acts of Congress!

Budgetary constraints.

Being on the radar screen.

As processor representative, and others too, our exposure is high. There could be a conflict of interest.

FOIAs--information gets misconstrued.

Loss of credibility among consumers.

Farmers pulling out of the organic label.

Industry organizations are polarized.

Intimidation of Board members--discouragement, derision.

Uncertain support in USDA.

No having law implemented timely, correctly.

Industry wants to milk the organics program.

Political threats, lobbying.

NOP staff intervening, devaluing certifiers--frustrating to key partners and their clients.

Transition from organizing phase to operating: Training, interface with certifiers, etc.

Program spread too thin.

Policies posted by NOP not always respected or need to be retreated--this harms credibility.

## **Vision Statement (Draft)**

NOSB's vision is an agricultural community rooted in organic principles and values that instills trust among consumers, producers, processors, retailers, and other stakeholders. Consistent and sustainable organic standards guard and advance the integrity of organic products and practices.

## **Mission Statement (Draft)**

To achieve its vision, the NOSB provides effective and constructive advice, clarification, and guidance concerning the NOP to the secretary of agriculture, seeking to represent a consensus of the organic community. In carrying out the mission, key activities of the Board are:

Assisting in development and maintenance of organic standards and regulations.

Conducting public meetings and listening to public comment.

Maintaining a national list of materials.

Communicating with, supporting, and coordinating with the NOP staff.

Communicating with the organic community.

Providing information and education on the national organic program.

## **Top Board Priorities**

*These priorities were identified as most important by consensus of the Board.*

Resources

Relationship with NOP staff

Materials review process and TAPs

Internal Board functioning (including outreach to others outside the Board)

Systems for Board recommendations

## **(Additional Priorities)**

*These priorities were identified in breakout discussion groups, but not included among the top priorities. They are nonetheless important, and are included in the notes so they can be addressed as time and resources permit.*

Standards and policies for unregulated sectors.

Processes for more frequent and constructive interactions between NOP and accredited certifiers to achieve uniform application of organic standards.

Relationships with constituencies (consumers, producers, farmers, etc.).

## Proposed Follow Up Actions

### ***Priority: Internal Board Functioning***

#### ***Immediate Follow Up–By the Next Full Board Meeting***

1. Establish a task force to:

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***Other Follow Up Ideas—From Parking Lot***

- Have non-executive committee board members take part in conference calls.
- Find out if private sector support (for example, from foundations) is possible, allowable.
- Determine the role of the NOSB on foods evaluation.

## **Board Vision for the Board/Staff Relationship**

- Characterized by:
  - Respect
  - Trust
  - Commitment
  - Accountability

- Collaborative, as it was in the percent-calculation effort.

## **Objectives for the Board/Staff Discussions**

- Develop strategies for strengthening the working relationships between the board and staff.
- Develop mechanisms to support board/staff communication and collaboration.

## **Groundrules**

- Start from now.
- Be constructive.
- Focus on processes, not people.
- Decide by consensus.

## **Breakout Group Discussion Questions**

1. What can the NOSB do to support a more cooperative and collaborative relationship with NOP staff?
2. What can the staff do?
3. What are proposed mechanisms to support a more cooperative, collaborative relationship?

## **Breakout Group Reports on NOSB/NOP Collaboration**

### ***Report 1***

#### ***1., 2. What can the NOSB do to support a more cooperative and collaborative relationship with NOP staff? What can the staff do?***

- Board and NOP staff identify priorities from the NOP project list.
- Board identifies its priorities, using format used by NOP.
- NOP provides guidance on how to format recommendations.
- NOSB goes through its recommendations and puts them into format, and evaluates recommendations.
- Recruit volunteers (non-NOSB, non-NOP) and post on web, create news release.
- Board writes a statement that “organics” is open to everyone and everyone is welcomed to play.

### ***Report 2***

#### ***1. What can the board do to support a more cooperative and collaborative relationship with NOP staff?***

- Understand the roles.
- Have NOP sign off on board workplan.
- Accountability to NOP for actions.
- Recognition of NOP limitations.

- Mirror/mesh workplans.
  - Almost like an MOU with NOP.
  - Unified voice for NOP (with differences of opinion respected).
  - Simplify recommendations (be careful with annotations!)
- 2. *What can the staff do to support a more cooperative and collaborative relationship with the NOSB?***
- Assume leadership; accept responsibility.
  - Accept NOSB as partners.
  - Accept NOSB as an important resource.
- 3. *What are proposed mechanisms to support a more cooperative, collaborative relationship?***
- E-mail–Need a closed chat room.
  - Board recommendations–Need tracking and progress reports.

### ***Report 3***

- 1. *What can the NOSB do to support a more cooperative and collaborative relationship with NOP staff?***
- Need for teamwork.
  - Commit to engage one another directly.
  - Prioritize work with input from one another.
  - Document decisions.
  - Consistency in responses.
  - Process needs to be deliverative.

**2. *What can the staff do to support a more cooperative and collaborative relationship with the NOSB?***

- Acknowledge receipt of projects.
- Respect limitations, process, realities.
- Documentation.
- Consistency in responses.

**3. *What are proposed mechanisms to support a more cooperative, collaborative relationship?***

- Put information on the website.
- Conference calls.
- Template for status of work.
- Documentation of decisions.
- Offer solutions to problems.
- Prioritization (work collaboratively with input from one another).
- \* Consensus building on issues between NOP and NOSB.

***Report 4***

**1. *What can the NOSB do to support a more cooperative and collaborative relationship with NOP staff?***

- Recognize level of need.
- Stay focused—prioritize.
- Have an action plan with accountability.
- Have understanding and empathy for NOP.
- Respect chain of command NOSB/NOP; need deliberate flow process—sequential and

strategic.

- Recognize cultures and roles, private vs public sector.
  - Communication in pre-planning stage
  - Respond to NOP timely.
  - Strive toward sufficient resources.
- 2. *What can the staff do to support a more cooperative and collaborative relationship with the NOSB?***
- Pre-view, share information before policy statements.
  - Solicit NOSB input or advice for official policy statements..
  - Clear work plan with the board.
  - Provide follow through or reaction to NOSB recommendations.
- 3. *What are proposed mechanisms to support a more cooperative, collaborative relationship?***
- Coordinate both groups' work plans.
  - Interaction with all NOP staff through Barbara..
  - Interaction with all NOSB members through Dave.

## Feedback on the Meeting

### *Appreciated*

The facilitator!

Everyone's openness

Just having the meeting!

Getting the time to work as a group.

The strength, leadership, thinking of the group.

Clear instructions for the group activities.

The humor!

### *Do differently next time*

Have more time.

Have more time with the NOP.

Come to East Hampton and get some home cooking!

Get the instructions in advance so we can get ready.

Have espresso!